RESTORATION REVIEW

No union is possible until love becomes the triumphant force. Look at the early church. In loving Him they loved one another, and love spread its beautiful mantle over many faults and many differences. Our plea for union will never triumph until religious people of differing creeds shall learn to love each other more. "Beloved, if Christ so loved us, we ought also to love one another." — *J. H. Garrison, 1902*

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Jesus Today . . .

THE SON OF MAN: WHAT JESUS CALLED HIMSELF

> *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.*—Acts 7:56

One interesting thing about this passage is that it is the only instance out of 82 occurrences in the New Covenant Scriptures that the name Son of Man is not from the lips of Jesus himself (or a quotation from him as in one case). In fact, except for this instance in *Acts* the title is found only in the gospel records. One would suppose that since Son of Man is so tied to the self-disclosure of Jesus that the apostle Paul, so eager to exalt the one he met on the Damascus road, would use this significant title. But he does not, not even once. There may be a reason for this—a reluctance to speak of him in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" as the son of *man.*

This reluctance has pervaded the church until now. The title Son of Man has never been used by the church to describe the messianic character of Jesus. From our pulpits today Jesus may be exalted as the Son of God, the Savior, and as the Prince of Peace, but not as Son of Man. Even though Jesus hardly referred to himself in any other way, we hesitate to call him what he called himself. If you ask yourself if you now and again refer to Jesus as the Son of Man, the answer is probably no. If this is an oddity, it must have been just as odd when Jesus described himself in this way to the people of his time. It must have blown the minds of the Pharisees and Sadducees when Jesus referred to himself in this way, usually in the third person. It is remarkable that they never took it up with him, as they did when he presumed to forgive sins. The Son of Man entree seemed to have caught them off guard. They didn't know how to handle it, so they left it alone. This study may help us to understand why.

Stephen's use of the term Son of Man, in the very face of death, is not without its significance, for it reveals that he was witness to the Messiah now occupying the throne of the universe and that believers have a way into the presence of God more satisfying than the temple ritual. It also shows that he realized that the term Son of Man had cosmic meaning and implied far more than that the Christ had come in the flesh. T. W. Manson, the British scholar who made a long study of such terms, may be right when he sees Stephen as saying that the vision of Dan. 7:13 (where the Son of man comes from the presence of God to receive the kingdom) has been fulfilled and that all the institutions of the past were thus antiquated and superseded.

While Jesus' hearers were more or less familiar with the idea of Son of Man, we cannot be sure what it denoted in their minds. It is used frequently in Ezekiel as the way in which God addressed the prophet, but it hardly means more than *man,* and it certainly has no messianic or supernatural connotation. But the reference in Daniel does, for one like the Son of Man comes with the clouds into the presence of the Ancient of Days. God gives to him "dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him." While this man is not described as suffering, he brings the kingdom to the suffering saints on earth, or so it seems.

This reference in Daniel must have influenced Jewish thinking, for it continued to be interpreted in terms of a coming Messiah in the inter-testamental literature. In the Book of Enoch the Son of Man is a pre-existent heavenly figure who descends to earth to sit in judgment against the wicked and to deliver the righteous. The righteous will reign with the Son of Man in a kingdom of glory forever. Enoch must have been widely read. Fragments of it were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The book describes the heavenly creature as having "the appearance of a man" and the face of an angel. It describes him somewhat like Rev. 1 depicts "one like a son of man," including such a detail as his head being of white wool.

While it is clear that Jesus did not pull a title out of the air or invent a new concept when he referred to himself as Son of Man (oddly enough, the *only* term he freely used!), it is uncertain as to how much this background influenced his use of it. He sometimes used it in a very earthly way, nothing like its meaning in Enoch and Daniel, such as in Matt. 8:20: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head," and Lk. 7:34: "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners. ", And sometimes he used it as if he were referring to someone else, for whom he was preparing the way, as in Matt. 10:23: "But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes."

And sometimes he used Son of Man as if he meant simply *man*, or little more than that, such as his saying, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Since he had already said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," some scholars conclude that he was really saying that *man* is lord of the Sabbath rather than that the Christ is. This may also be the force of Matt. 12:32, where it is said that one can blaspheme against the Son of Man and be forgiven, but not the Holy Spirit. It clears up a mystery if Jesus is saying: you can sin against what *man* says and be forgiven; it is much more serious to sin against what God says through the Spirit. Otherwise it is difficult to see why sinning against the Messiah himself would be less sinful than sinning against the

Spirit. Since Mark (the first gospel) does not use Son of Man when quoting this (Mk. 3:28), but says, "whatever blasphemies they utter," it may be that Jesus is simply showing how much more serious it is to reject what God says than what man says (such as the Pharisees).

Sometimes Jesus referred to himself as the *suffering* Son of Man, which was not part of the Jewish concept, such as "the Son of Man should suffer many things and be treated with contempt" (Mk. 9:12), and "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk. 9:45). It was in reference to his suffering and death that Jesus pointed to his resurrection, again in terms of being the Son of Man; "The Son of Man is to be delivered up into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise again three days later" (Mk. 9:31).

As the Jews were unprepared to think of the Son of Man as one who would be killed, so they were unable to think of him in terms of a *risen* Messiah. It helps us to understand why the disciples were unprepared for what Jesus taught them about dying and rising again. Even though they could see Jesus as the supernatural Son of Man, they could not see such a one as dead and again alive, even though Jesus told them again and again. Our minds simply cannot comprehend things that are too foreign. We can see why the disciples were actually *surprised* over the resurrection.

It was once a popular view that Jesus' use of Son of Man was parallel to his being the Son of God, one being a claim to his humanity, the other to his divinity. Closer study showed this position to be erroneous, for Jesus refers to Son of Man as one would to the Son of God, such as Mk. 14:62: "You shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven," and Lk. 9:26: "the Son of Man will come in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels." But it is clear that our Lord opted for the title Son of Man rather than Son of God, but we are not to conclude that this was for the purpose of emphasizing his humanity and minimizing his divinity.

We can conclude that Jesus used the title to point *both* to his messianic role as a suffering servant and his messianic dignity as one who shared the glory of God. In Matt. 16:13 Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" One view was that Jesus might be one of the ancient prophets risen from the dead (but this did not allow that the risen prophet should in turn be murdered and risen from the dead!)

The answers all indicated that Jesus was somebody cosmic or supernatural, and when Peter confessed him to be the Christ, this fit perfectly with the concept of Son of Man. And messianic dignity is strong in some of Jesus' pronouncements, such as "In the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne" (Matt. 19:28).

Our Lord's use of this title tells us something of his relevance both to his own time and ours. He chose a self-disclosing term that was both familiar and ambiguous, both known and unknown, so that he could do with it what he pleased. When he pointed to the suffering role of his mission, it was more understandable that the Son of *Man* would suffer than the Son of God. If he wished to point to the cosmic implications ("the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory"), the background had been laid by Daniel and Enoch.

Too, he took his enemies off guard by referring to himself in this way. Reluctant to refer to himself as Son of God, which would have laid him open to their attacks, he chose a term that *could* have all the implications of deity. But who can be too disturbed over someone referring to himself as a son of man, or even the Son of Man, when it meant different things.

It points up the unpredictability of Jesus. Had you been writing the script, would you have ever dreamed of labeling the envoy from heaven, the Christ of God, the eternal Word, as *the Son of Man?* That he might have accepted the title had someone thought to identify him with the one referred to by Daniel and Enoch is barely thinkable, but that he would have made the title his virtual trade-mark, the only one with which he seemed comfortable, is impossible. But that is Jesus! Who can even begin to understand him? Or to trace out his ways?

Had the God of heaven waited until now to send the Messiah, one might wonder how he would draw from our culture to describe himself. A few possibilities cross my mind.

Ensign? (Look it up).

Ambassador? (Maybe, but it is not ambiguous enough)

Lone Ranger? (Perhaps, if he came to Texas).

Consul? (The ingredients may be there, but Counsel might be better).

There is no way to do it. It shows why the God of heaven "in the fulness of time" sent forth His son, after preparing Israel as the community that would give him to the world. But with or without Israel as "the situation," there is no way to second guess Jesus. Even the Biblical scholars, who like to have the answers, are baffled by the way Jesus chose to refer to himself as the Son of Man.

And this he did when speaking in the tenderest and friendliest of terms. To the blind man that he caused to see, now battered and bloodied by jealous legalists, Jesus asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Stymied only by the ambiguity of the question, the liberated man asked, “Who is he, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” When Jesus identified himself as the Son of Man, the man believed on him and worshipped him.

What a story! And the hero is the Son of Man, not the Son of God!

While it never made its way into any creed, I gladly add to the church’s confessions: *I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of Man, the risen Lord, who will come in clouds of glory.*—the Editor

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TYRANNY OF THOUGHTLESSNESS

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord.—Isa. 1:18

As I write these words our world appears to be incendiary. The news from Poland, a land of stout-hearted souls seeking freedom, is bleak. The president of Syria is threatening the lives of American leaders, an American general has been kidnaped in Italy. The Middle East is in turmoil and wars and civil strife rage from Afghanistan to El Salvador to Northern Ireland. It is not an encouraging picture, for tyranny appears to have the momentum.

Tyranny takes many forms, some being more subtle than others. Weaponry, brute force, political chicanery, economic pressure, and usurpation of power are the more obvious forms, and the history of the world, as Hegel has suggested, is the story of man’s struggle to be free of such oppression. When the prophets spoke of that glad day when men will beat their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks they were referring to victory over such tyrannies.

But some tyrannies are dangerously subtle, such as the tyranny of the majority, as Alexis de Tocqueville described the afflictions sometimes heaped upon the minority. In his *Democracy in America*, which was the French official’s view of this nation in the 1830’s, he warned of this subtle form of tyranny. What appears to be freedom—the rule of the majority—can actually be tyranny. Our founding fathers were aware of this, so they gave birth to a nation ruled by laws rather than by persons. But the majority can often manipulate law and heap injustice upon the minority. The way this nation has treated the Indians and the blacks, and in some respects the women, bears witness that there is no way to make freedom foolproof.

As careful as the architects of our Constitution were, they could not guarantee security from what the Christ must have had in mind when he warned *Beware of men!* James Madison, the father of the Constitution, was criticized for being overly cautious. One of his colleagues said to him, “Mr. Madison, you don’t seem to trust anyone but ourselves.” To which the elegant Virginian replied, “Sir, I don’t trust even ourselves!”

This must be one reason why the God of heaven put government in the church, as 1 Cor. 12:28 indicates, rather than giving us a society of believers governed by majority rule. While elders should seek to ascertain“the mind of the meeting,” as the Quakers quaintly state it, by always providing an open forum within the church, they must have the right to make the final decisions. An open forum may reveal to experienced overseers that a very small minority of the church is right and the vast majority wrong. Elders must do what is *right* under God, even if the entire church wants it otherwise.

On the other hand it is evident that elders sometimes become oppressive. The apostle Paul anticipated this in Acts 20:29. So the church, to whom the office of presbyter belongs, must always have the power of recall, in order to unseat the elder who would arrogate power unto himself. 1 Tim. 5:19 makes it clear that the apostles allowed that under certain circumstances elders could be brought to judgment by the congregation.

Another subtle form of tyranny that relates to all forms of oppression is the refusal or inability *to think*, especially to think critically and responsibly. It is noteworthy that in the context of Isa 1:18, where the Lord invites his people to reason with Him, the prophet says, “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint” (v. 5) and the next verse says the head has no soundness in it. The people were in trouble because they were not thinking. They had head sickness as well as heart sickness. It is surely a peril of our own age, in the church as well as in the world. We may have more “educated” people in the church than ever before, but that does not mean that we are a thinking people.

One famous educator, Nicholas Murray Butler, believed that all the world’s problems could be solved if people were willing to think, but he concluded that this does not happen because thinking is such hard work. Edison reached a similar conclusion, that thinking is such hard work that most people are willing to let someone else do it for them. But it is Don Marquis that really puts it to us: *If you make people think they’re thinking, they’ll love you; but if you really make them think, they’ll hate you.* This must at least be the case with those of us who do not really want the truth.

Perhaps this is what got the prophets in trouble: *they made the people think.* Micah, for instance, kept trying to get the people to remember what God had done. *Answer me!*, he would demand, trying to get a response from an unthinking people. Isaiah referred to the people as having fat hearts, heavy ears, and closed eyes! And Psa. 32:9 says, “Be not

like a horse or a mule, without understanding." It seems odd that the only *thinking* animal would have to be exhorted not to be like a mule. It simply would not do to suggest that our churches may be as mule-like as they are Christ-like, with or without their college degrees! A Socrates among us might say it, as he did to the ancient Greeks, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Is a church, enmeshed in the tyranny of thoughtlessness, really worth the while.

There can be no question that Jesus came to set people to thinking, and he was not all that successful, not even with his disciples, for he would say to them, "Are you also without understanding?," and Mark (6:52) writes of even the twelve that "their hearts were hardened." It is a compliment to the human race that the Messiah came as a *teacher.* It is an implication from the Creator that man *can* be taught, if he will but make the effort. Mark tells us that Jesus "explained everything" to his disciples, while using only parables with the masses. It was an adventure in education that ended at the cross. The church leadership understood him all too well. They murdered him because he sought to liberate the people in mind as well as heart.

I have numerous books in my library on how to think, rules of logic, and all the rest, such as Descartes' famous essay on *Rules for the Direction of the Mind.* But I am not persuaded that such helps are all that necessary. Any normal person *can* think and think aright, if only she will. God has made us that way. Nothing is more natural than for man and woman to think. But we also have a proclivity to be lazy, mentally as well as physically. We don't think because we don't want to badly enough. And sometimes it hurts to think honestly and critically. While it has great rewards, such as self-respect and freedom, it also has a price tag.

While this journal makes no claim of being issued from a think tank, it can be thought of as an invitation to think—in an honest-to-goodness, down home kind of way. We are something like the inmate of a state hospital who was witness to the problem of a man at curb side changing a tire on his car. The nuts to the wheel had rolled down the gutter and the man was in a quandary as to what to do. When the inmate suggested through the iron picket fence that he might take one nut from each of his other wheels, the man responded with surprise, "How could *you* figure that out?" The inmate replied, "I might be crazy but I am not stupid."

Perhaps we are crazy, some seem to think so, but we are not stupid. It does not take an Einstein to see that we in the Churches of Christ, not to mention most other denominations, have made some crucial mistakes. We only need to think, *really* think about the direction we have taken. For decades we have nursed the myth of being "the true, restored New Testament church," to the exclusion of all others, the only Christians!

And this myth has spawned all sorts of self-imposed hardships, such as the notion that we can't have fellowship with anyone else, and that even in the mission field among pagans we must be rivals with other Christians.

If we will indulge in some robust self-analysis we will see others (many of whom read this journal) hanging on by their fingernails, hoping that our people will get with it and become a responsible part of the Christian world. If we lose most of our young people before they even reach college, there is a reason. If we have more people in the Church of Christ who have "had it" and attend no church than those who do attend (and this includes cities all across Texas), there is a reason why.

There is a tyranny that is doing us in, and it is rampant in the pulpit, Sunday School, and elders' meetings—and, yes, in our publications as well. We are not thinking! The tyranny of thoughtlessness. We need some prophets like Micah and Isaiah (crazy people?) who will drag us kicking and screaming into the realities of the 20th century. Look at stricken Poland. Dare we take our Church of Christisms into such a troubled world? But we *do* have a message to bear, and we *are* a committed people. We only need to liberate ourselves from our most destructive enemy, *ourselves,* our own tyranny of thoughtlessness.

There is evidence that the battle has been joined. We are at war with our debilitating sectarianism. And we will win!

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle,

Be a hero in the strife. —the Editor

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JESUS: THE CURE FOR DOGMATISM

When men are the most sure and arrogant, they are commonly the most mistaken.—David Hume

Those who refuse the long drudgery of thought, and think with the passions rather than the head, are ever most fiercely dogmatic.—Peter Bayne

Our Lord may have been positive but he was not arrogant. If dogmatism is "stating an opinion in an arrogant manner," as Webster indicates, then Jesus was certainly not dogmatic. To the contrary, Jesus came *teaching*, and his ministry was a rebuke to dogmatic religion. He did not come to debate but to persuade. "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (Jn. 16:12) are not the words of a dogmatist. When he was brought before those in authority "He opened not his mouth," to the consternation of his enemies. He did not always have to answer back. He had no points to prove—only a Father to reveal.

Yet dogmatism has long been a besetting sin of those of us who profess to be his followers. Many of us have been "most sure and arrogant," as Hume puts it, about matters that are not all that important. We have to be right! And about what? Not so much what C. S. Lewis calls "mere Christianity," such as the meekness and gentleness of Christ, but the main points of "the party line." When this is the case, we convince folk of but one thing, that we are arrogant and dogmatic.

One of our readers, a professor in a Christian college, writes us about what he calls "the new, up-coming 'feeling generation,'" which he sees as more open, better versed in Scripture, and less dogmatic than their teachers. He added some words that especially impressed me: "Perhaps it is because the more you know (about) Him, the less dogmatic you become. Truth is truth, but the more one knows of it, the more one's attitude seems to become like God's, 'truthing in love'"!

We must overcome our arrogant dogmatism, and Jesus is our answer. The more we know him the less dogmatic we are. This is because dogmatism is actually a defense mechanism that hides our insecurity. When we find our security in Jesus there is no need for dogmatism. When we are right where it really counts, which is our relationship with him who came to seek and to save the lost, we don't have to be all that right about a lot of other stuff. Jesus is really the only big deal. Once we are at peace with him, we don't have to have the last word. *Love keeps no score of wrongs* is the way one version renders 1 Cor. 13:5. It could be said that love keeps no score at all. One does not have to "win" when the victory is already won.

We must concede that Peter Bayne is right when he says that the most fiercely dogmatic people are those who refuse the long drudgery of thought. They think with their passions, he says, which is not to think at all. Pilate was thinking when he concluded that it was because of envy that Jesus' enemies were after him. But his enemies were not thinking. Mob violence is always irrational, and irrationality has immersed this world in darkness.

Thinking is often painful, "Drudgery" as Bayne has suggested, and we fear it will lead to conclusions that we cannot handle. But pain is part of the price of liberty. It is truth —*truthing in love* —that makes us free. It may hurt but it liberates.

For many years this journal has sought answers to the problem of a divided church. We are persuaded that freedom from dogmatism will go far in healing us. When the apostle urges "Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men" (Philip. 4:5) he provides an antidote for the quarrelsome spirit behind most of our factions. Forbearance listens; dogmatism does not. Forbearance realizes that by the bowels of Christ it may be wrong, while dogmatism can not bear the thought of being wrong.

I think of my friend Perry Gresham, who was president of Bethany College when I taught there. He tells how he would respond to the critical letters he received. "You may be right," he would say to his critics. This was not a mere ploy, but an attitude toward truth. One may believe he is right while acknowledging he may be wrong. We can certainly believe we are right without insisting that everyone else is wrong.

A little more of this kind of attitude—sweet reasonableness and loving forbearance—rather than an intolerable dogmatism will do more to generate peace among our fractured people than a thousand confrontations. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, points the way.—*the Editor*

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Highlights in Restoration History. . .

A LITANY OF CELEBRATION

It says something for our sense of history that we have given more than passing notice to the union of the Christian Churches, under the leadership of Barton W. Stone, and Disciples of Christ, who looked especially to Alexander Campbell, a century and a half ago this month. I fear it might be ignored. I was preparing to celebrate the occasion all by myself, if necessary. I may have been influenced by the fact that our folk allowed the 100th anniversary of the death of Alexander Campbell to pass without notice. I recall that night, March 4, 1966. I called my friend Louie Cochran, author of *The Fool of God*, and we had our own memorial service there on the telephone!

The Wilshire Christian Church in Los Angeles hosted a Celebration of Heritage, inviting Disciples of Christ and Churches of Christ to participate. The "Heritage Committee" was made up of folk from all three groups, including Frank Pack and Jerry

Rushford from Churches of Christ, Robert Fife from Christian Churches, and Ronald Osborn from the Disciples. It was sponsored by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society in Nashville.

The highlight of this celebration was a reenactment of the handshake between Barton W. Stone and Raccoon John Smith back in 1832 in Lexington that symbolized the union that was then being effected. In Los Angeles Frank Pack and James Pierson (Disciple) joined hands in memory of that event. The Wilshire church was presented with a bronze plaque to commemorate the occasion.

We all realize of course that it takes more than a handshake to make any real difference, but a handshake is a good start. Back in 1832 they backed up the handshake by sending out two men to ride horseback among the churches, proclaiming their oneness. Shortly after the union in Lexington Barton Stone moved to Jacksonville, IL. where he found a Disciple church and a Christian church still separated. He met with each group, insisting that he would have no more to do with either until they got together. They soon became one church. It is apparent that they had a passion for unity that we do not have. While we can be thankful for all the handshakes, let's move beyond that and do something like our forebears did!

Other things are being planned as part of the sesquicentennial celebration. Paul Crow, president of the Disciples' Council on Christian Unity, will give a lecture series at Lexington Theological Seminary, and there will be a Cane Ridge Day on June 29 with Willis R. Jones as speaker. The Disciples also plan a gathering in Lexington in August to further celebrate, with William E. Tucker of TCU as the speaker, one of their leading historians.

While the Churches of Christ may not do much of this, it is noteworthy that editor Reuel Lemmons of the *Firm Foundation* suggests that every church should have "some sort of meeting" in celebration of what happened at Lexington. He also said, "We believe that something should be done—not just once every one hundred fifty years—to keep alive, and give meaning to, the spirit of unity characterized by the Lexington meeting." He says we can learn from Lexington how to unite upon our agreements rather than to divide over our differences. But it is unlikely that any of our churches will follow these suggestions. We still have a fear of the lessons that history teaches, but in time this will change.

I was honored to be a part of the sort of celebration that Reuel had in mind, at the Calvary Christian Church in Flint, Michigan. Despite inclement weather we had a fine assembly made up of people from all three churches. I spoke on the occasion, sharing anecdotes on some of the favorite passages of Scripture of our pioneers, which revealed

their love for the Bible and for each other. But the thing that impressed me was a Litany of Celebration prepared by Bill and Linda Watson and issued by the Disciples of Christ Historical Society. We all read it together, responsively, which is what a litany is. I wish all our churches could make it part of its program sometime in 1982. A copy can be obtained by writing to DCHS, 1101 19th Ave. South, Nashville 37212. But part of it is as follows:

Leader: On this 150th anniversary of the joining of Christians and Disciples, we remember our heritage, ask forgiveness of our failures, and pray for the future.

People: Hear our prayers, a God.

Leader: For the vision of Barton Warren Stone, who saw through petty differences to the bonds that unite all Christians in one body.

People: We thank you, God, Source of our vision.

Leader: For the dream of Thomas Campbell, who knew that "The church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one."

People: We thank you, God, giver of dreams.

Leader: For the leadership of Alexander Campbell, who wrote and preached, who studied and debated and worked to give shape to the vision and the dream.

Prayer: We thank you, God, Strength of leaders.

Leaders: For the many unknown disciples who shared the vision of church united, and who covenanted together to be that church on Jan. 1, 1832, at Lexington.

Prayer: We give you thanks, God, Source of our unity.

Unison: We thank you for the rich heritage that is ours, and for the exciting possibilities facing us in the future. We pray that as your people in this world, we may work to be reconcilers bringing healing, peace, and unity; in the name of the Christ who reconciles us to you, Amen—*the Editor*

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SHOULD WE KILL THE CHILD?

Robert Meyers

That bizarre question grows out of a fine church bulletin note written years ago by my friend John Paul Hundley, who was then minister for the Westlink Church of Christ in Wichita, Kansas. Mr. Hundley found a parallel to our contemporary church life in Aldous Huxley's story about Hercules in *Crome Yellow.*

Hercules, the story says, weighed only three pounds when he was born. Fully grown, he stood only three feet and four inches. Since his parents died when he was twenty-one and left him a fortune, he began remodeling his home to suit his size.

He needed special furniture because he was so diminutive. To salve his ego, he made sure that no servant was employed who stood over four feet tall. He bought only Shetland ponies and the smallest breed of dogs. In short, he tailored the world to suit his own dwarfishness.

In marriage he was lucky, because he found a woman of noble birth who was only three feet tall. He and his bride retired to their artificially tiny world after their marriage and happily blotted out all reminders of the vaster life going on about them.

Their joy was unbounded when a son, Ferdinonda, was born in their fourth year of marriage. But the happiness soon turned to sorrow as the boy began showing clear signs of growing to normal stature. By the time he was three, he was taller than his mother. Unable to face the child's outstripping them, the parents prayed for strength to bear their cross. Not finding it, they decided to kill themselves rather than accept the physical superiority of their son.

The church, says Mr. Hundley, *should* rejoice in the health, strength and beauty of its children. Instead, it is disturbed if they stand taller. "We are suspicious of our children who want to achieve academic excellence; we become disturbed at [their] examining passages of scripture not commonly taught in 'standard' causes and sermons; we become fearful of [their] examining a new translation of the Bible based on more ancient manuscripts; we wish we could just 'hold services' and not have to think about the twentieth century and the dynamic relevance of the gospel to it. A world aflame with revolution and social change frightens us. How we wish we could withdraw into the 'good old days' and avoid thinking about these things. Like Hercules and his wife we have a decision to make about the problem of our brilliant children. But here the parallel ends. Rather than accept their solution or another solution, it seems that the modern church prefers infanticide!"

This is writing as provocative and relevant as it was when my friend first printed it in a bulletin of very limited circulation. I have lost track of him, but I hope that wherever he is there is some congregation making use of his talents.—*Wichita State University, Wichita 67208*

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CHURCHED TO DEATH

Edward Fudge

We just may be "churched" to death. There is so much religion—in so many competing brands —that God is often lost in the scramble. Whatever you thought of the movie "O God," or the idea behind it, it at least told the truth about that. Many folks in sheer desperation have done one of two things.

The non-religious ones (in a traditional sense) have turned off the whole business and gone their way without it. The religious ones (in a traditional sense) have settled into a comfortable nook somewhere and buried their heads in the sand. Many of them admit in private that their formal religion leaves them cold, and that it has little relevance to the cares and decisions of everyday life.

Maybe the saddest part of all this is that the good that is there so often goes to waste. How many people belong to liturgical churches, for example, but attend meetings only at Christmas or Easter? Jesus fills much of their prayer-book, but for these folks it has become his prison. Or take the matter of Bible study. What a storehouse of strength and wisdom the Scriptures are, for any who will read them and listen. But how many people whose churches feature something called "Bible study" actually spend most of their time meandering around the text, or rehashing a favorite proof-verse that makes them look good and their neighbors across the street look bad? A wealth of hope and inspiration meanwhile lies untouched at their feet.

Consider good deeds or acts of mercy. Christian churches ought to mean more by these than, say, the Boy Scouts or the local Jaycees. The church does its good with Jesus in center view—at least that's the way He seemed to have intended it. We ought to help others because Jesus has helped us. And we ought to do good to whoever has the need exactly as if He were the recipient of our mercy! Yet this wonderful plan so often blurs—benevolence becomes a burden and grace gets buried under grudge. Without Jesus at the center of its thinking, the church has to compete with the social and civic organizations,

where it is at a decided loss. Their programs can be far more entertaining than ours, and their meals are definitely hard to beat!

Doctrine is high on some folks' agenda. The scholars say "doctrine" means "teaching," so nobody ought to complain about learning something new once in a while. Especially if it will comfort, encourage, strengthen, or give one a clearer view of God. But ahh—as Shakespeare might say—"there's the rub!" For such healthy teaching ("sound doctrine" in the King James) often is nowhere to be found. In its place is dead logic, useless lecture or uncharitable debate. Too often, when someone has a truly original insight, he/she has no chance to express it. When one does, he is often rebuffed by the status quo, or met by the empty stare of those whose springs have been wound up but whose brains are safely in neutral. So the thoughtful person ends up squelched, or frustrated, or quitting altogether.

From all indications, these ailments are all quite human - and seemingly undated. When Moses gave God's people a brass snake some 3300 years ago, as a symbol of the divine healing power, they soon forgot God and ended up worshipping the snake. When Jesus announced his own saving ministry in his home town of Nazareth, most of the townspeople couldn't recognize his true identity because they had known him so well all his life. And lest anyone hastily credit the Jews unduly for these errors, he might remember that 20 centuries of more recent history show a hundred ways professing Christians have made the same mistake.

Who is willing to get serious about profession of faith? I don't mean "say words" I mean "get serious." The adjective "born-again" has become pop currency and devalued through over-use. People are "churched" to death. Nobody gets excited about new programs—especially the happy pagans they are invented to reach. Mass media have made skeptics of us all. Phonies are a dime a dozen on every corner, and we are all tired of being "had." The world is dying by slow starvation for lack of authentic concern and individual love.

Folks today want to see changed lives, not just hear occasional testimonies. (Of all the celebrity converts recently, Charles Colson has made powerful impressions for good for this very reason.) More "church" is not the answer—if we mean nothing more by that than rationalism, ritual and real estate. Knowledgeable Catholics know that the church that counts must also be "holy," and informed Protestants remember that the true church will be marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit and the true preaching of Jesus Christ.

Friends on the west coast report that lukewarm Christians are less plentiful in southern California. There people tend to be either "on-fire" believers, or unpretending pagans. As our own American brand of cultured paganism becomes stronger across the

land, we in the southern Bible Belt may come to observe the same phenomenon. And it might not be so bad at that. Jesus once warned a lukewarm church that even cold was better than tepid.

So hang in there, brothers and sisters! Sometimes learning what's wrong is the first step toward recognizing what's right. What's right is still Jesus Christ—the historic gospel—the universal Christian faith. Our movement has had some good slogans and principles too, even if they have been parroted more than they have been practiced. The last thing we need to do is quit Jesus. He is the only hope any of us have. The good news is that He is all any of us need. Why, Jesus can even give life to people who have been "churched" to death.—*4 Sandra Lane, Athens, AL 35611*

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THE SADDEST PRAYER I HAVE EVER HEARD

Charles W. Salmon

She was old and very ill and the look of pain was in her eyes as I approached her bedside. I introduced myself as the hospital Chaplain and she shared with me what must have been the greater part of her agony. She told me of her prayer and the pathos of it has never been forgotten.

She said, "I told them we are all connected together but they don't believe me, so I have asked God to cut us apart."

Even in her pain and confusion she had noticed that, as death approached, others had withdrawn from her. The visits of doctors and nurses became briefer and less friendly. Hospital volunteers no longer came to offer magazines, candy bars, and conversation. Helpless relatives, who, "Didn't know what to say," no longer tried. Perhaps she had protested this at first and pleaded for human companionship, but eventually she gave up and now faced death in the cold grip of utter loneliness. Her final resignation was expressed in her petition to God to "cut us apart."

She accepted my offer to pray for her but I knew it was merely a courtesy she extended to me, for I was among those "cut apart" from her and it was too late. She had made peace with God and severed her ties with everyone else. Quietly, I prayed for her and for all the lonely people like her. In the morning she was gone. I soon forgot her name but occasionally I am reminded of her pathetic prayer and the sadness it caused me to feel. Her greatest agony was not caused by the pain and fever that racked her body and muddled her mind. It was the result of the failure of others to relate to her in any supportive way.

The lesson is clear. We all need each other! She was right in her assumption that we are all “connected together.” Isn’t that about what Jesus meant when He said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.”? John 15:5 (NIV)

Using a different metaphor, Paul repeats this same truth in Romans 12:4,5; “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and those members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”

That’s why it is such a disaster when a brother or sister separates himself from the family of God or refuses to be concerned about the needs of others who might be helped. The Church offers great resources for spiritual healing and growth for those who are willing to give themselves in the service of others.

You need me and I need you. We both need God. Let’s not allow anyone to “cut us apart.”—*2110 Browon St., Houston, TX 77034*

READER'S EXCHANGE

My first ministry was in a small town, Linden, Tn., between David Lipscomb College in Nashville and Freed-Hardeman in Henderson. Needless to say, this was the hot-bed of legalism in those years. Therefore, when you write about legalism, I have some experience and understanding of what you are saying. I sincerely pray that the time will come when brethren can disagree in a more Christian manner and the energy that is now used in fighting and arguing will be united against the great deceiver, Satan, who is our most horrible adversary.—*Rupert R. Wallace, Laurel Ave. Church of Christ, Chesapeake, Va.*

(It is encouragIng that more and more of US are discovering who the real enemy is and whom we should be fighting instead of each other. “Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood,” the Scriptures assure us, but against the strongholds of Satan. Even the Baptists and Methodists are not our enemies. They are “flesh and blood,” aren’t they? I rejoice that some are learning this, even between Henderson and Nashville.—*Ed.*)

I continue to appreciate and benefit from your work. It cuts through so much theological hog-wash and gets down to where it touches our lives. Your keen discernment amazes me. How about dealing with the question of inerrancy of the Bible? I feel we fundamentalists have glossed over this too glibly.—*Jerry Frasure, Cedarville, Oh.*

(If and when I can bring myself to write at some length on that question it will be to show that we cannot have it both ways, that the Bible is a human product and yet wholly without error. I believe in the trustworthiness of Scripture (it adequately conveys the message that God intends) but not in its inerrancy, for God has given us His word through imperfect earthen vessels. That there are errors in the Bible is a matter of fact, but there are no errors of consequence, errors that inveigh upon God's self-disclosure. In fact, the jars and dashes only enhance the beauty of the Bible, showing how "the Master's voice" still gets through, even if there is static on the record. I have no interest in worshipping a book, not even the Book, only the Person of the Book.—*Ed*.)

God bless you and Ouida both. WE LOVE YOU. We hope you are holding up under the heavy burdens that you are called on to bear. I preached last Sunday on Ps. 121. It is a message we all need. Keep looking up. We are on the winning side!—*Antoine Valdetero, Jennings, La.*

(Upon receiving this, I read Ouida the psalm referred to in the Good News Bible. If you will stop and read it now, it will bless you. I love that line, *He* is *by your side.* It reminds me of that great theologian Karl Barth, who wove his theology around the simple truth that *God is for us.* Many suppose He is against us and out to get us. To the contrary, however dark this world gets, the light still shines, and the darkness cannot overcome it. Yes, indeed, we are winners, *already,* even if we do get bruised and battered in battle.—*Ed*.)

I eagerly look forward to receiving your book on the Stone-Campbell movement. The European influences on the movement should be of special interest to us here. It will be good to read of Barton Stone because little is known here of his life and work.—*Ian S. Davidson, Glasgow, Scotland*

We consider your article "A Free Gift Visited" in the November issue so very important and needed in our fellowship. More should be written and spoken on this subject. I retired from American Airlines after 34 years and now function as a handy man for anyone who needs my talents. Life is wonderful and God is gracious!—*Al Bradshaw, Tulsa, Ok.*

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

There is no question but what Churches of Christ are changing, some of the changes being rather dramatic. The bulletin of the Southern Hills church in Tulsa tells of a dedication service for a newly born child. The "prayer of dedication" was given by Waymon Miller, an honored "war horse" that has seen many a battle for the Lord. He is the brother we quoted from recently who found a wonderful fellowship with Baptists and the like on the sea of Galilee. We rejoice that the leopard *can* change his spots! I must say, however, that I do not quite understand this business of dedicating to the Lord what is already His. Shall we round up the cattle on a thousand hills and bundle up the countless stars and dedicate them to their creator? Maybe a dedication service for a newly born child means that the parents are committing themselves before the church to bring the little one up in the nurture of the Lord. Or maybe it means that we like what the Presbyterians do and want to do something akin to it. But I am not being cranky about it. I am only pointing out that down the road things are going to be different, and I believe most of it will be for the better.

There are few men that I admired as much as I did William L. "Bill" Thompson, who died on Oct. 8, a short time after being a guest in our home, the last of his many trips away from his home in Aurora, Illinois. He was most helpful to me with my history book, and I imposed on him even when he was ill, asking him questions by phone. Hardly anyone understood the innards of the three churches of the Movement as he did, especially the Christian Church and the Disciples. Now and again I was made to marvel at his perceptive mind, and I was always impressed with his charitable attitude toward all. He was truly Christ-like. During his last visit with us we spoke and prayed together concerning the blessed hope. For a long time he was director of the European Evangelistic Society and was the first full-time administrator of the Christian Missionary Fellowship. The present director of the latter wrote of Bill in *Impact:* "He was gifted with an exceptional mind which he developed through wide reading and deep thinking. With some exception, our Movement was unready for his kind of thinking. He was a mission theologian and strategist whose conclusions were unrecognized and largely unused. Bill knew the nature of the Plea and of essential Christianity. He knew the nature of fellowship and of teamwork." Yes, *our Movement* was *unready for his kind of thinking*, for he was not an "undenominational" sectarian. Bill's life inspires me to help get our people ready for his kind of thinking.

Leroy and Ouida Garrett are joining David Reagan, who is now an expert in the field, in a trip to Israel, Nov. 8-18 of this year, which is the best time to go. He is allowing me to invite readers of this journal to go along on a joint-sponsorship basis. The cost is $1700 per person from New York. This is a rare opportunity and is worth the sacrifice. Special features: flight is directly to Tel Aviv, which avoids long delay with Arab security; stay in 5-star hotels (the very best), including the famous King David in Jerusalem; cost includes all transportation, meals, taxes, lodging, etc.; a proven Israeli guide that is retained by Dave Reagan for all his tours; Israel is covered from Dan to Beersheba; it is a *study* pilgrimage as well as sight-seeing, with devotionals at major sites and evening study sessions. Please inform us at once if you are interested, for the number is limited. We will send you a brochure.

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BOOK NOTES

You would do well to get acquainted with the writings of John White, a Canadian psychiatrist, who writes plainly to believers about their problems. *Parents* in *Pain* offers comfort and counsel to parents who have to cope with alcoholism, crime, homosexuality, and suicide in their children, 5.50 postpaid. *The Golden Cow* deals with today's materialism, especially the church's preoccupation with material things; you'll be interested in what he says about "Christian junk mail" and fund raising schemes, 4.50 postpaid. *Daring to Draw Near* is a Biblical study of people in prayer, especially the change that is wrought by prayer, 4.50 postpaid.

Preaching Through the Bible by Edwin V. Hayden is not just for preachers, for the study outlines are packed with vital information about much of the Bible. While it guides the preacher in Biblical preaching, it provides anyone with a useful tool for study. Only 8.95 in soft cover.

Howard Snyder has done the church a great service in pointing to the church as *community.* You will thrill over his *The Community of the King.* You would think him a Campbellite when he talks of the unity of the church. 4.75 postpaid. He is also the author of *The Problem of Wine Skins,* which deals with the problem of structures. What he says about church buildings will make you think. 5.50 postpaid.

K. C. Moser's books are from the past generation, but they continue to be appreciated since Moser was one of the first Church of Christ preachers to discover the beauty of the gospel of grace. *The Gist of Romans* and *The Way of Salvation* are 5.50 each, or both for 10.00 pp.

You can now get the entire Bible in *Today's English Version,* and we stock a handsome blue denim edition for 8.95 pp. You might also want to pick up a copy of Barclay's translation of NT for 3.50 pp.

We have a few copies of Ann Kiemal's *I Love the Word Impossible,* which makes a most thoughtful gift, at only 2.50 pp. Charlie Shedd's *The Fat Is In Your Head,* which tells you how to take it off, is only 2.50 pp., and we have two inexpensive paperbacks by Elton Trueblood: *Confronting Christ* (1.75 pp.) and *Alternative to Futility* (1.50 pp.)

For your library on our history you may not always have a chance to get Robert Richardson's *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell,* two vols. in one, which remains the richest source on our Movement. 19.95 pp. The *Biography of J. T. Johnson* is also a must. 7.50 pp. *The People's New Testament* by B. W. Johnson has long been a favorite commentary. You can get two volumes in one for only 12.50 pp.

And remember that the *Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* by Leroy Garrett, a 739-page study of our history from its inception in Europe to the Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ today, is now available. 19.95 plus 1.25 postage, but we will pay the postage if you pay in advance.

We have three bound volumes of *Restoration Review* still available. *Principles of Unity and Fellowship* (1977) and *The Ancient Order* (1978) are 5.50 each; *Blessed Are the Peacemakers* and *With All the Mind* (1979-1980), a double volume, is 8.50.

Since we no longer have time to keep books, we ask that all book orders (except our own books: the history and the bound volumes) be cash.

You will notice that for 1982 we have a modest increase in the subscription for *Restoration Review.* Single subs, 5.00 for one year, 8.00 for two years; in clubs of four or more, 3.00 per name per year, with no limit to the number; this can include one's own renewal.

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